Why do we have an inclusive language guide?

At AGAA we treat each other with human dignity and respect. One of the ways we do this is through the language we use. Language is a powerful tool and can have significant impact, both positive and negative. Inclusive language enables everyone to feel valued and respected and can help create a safe, inclusive, and equitable workplace.

This guideline provides a starting point for learning about inclusive language for those who have cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Australia is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse countries in the world and it is important that our language reflects, and respects, this. Using clear language and avoiding the use of slang or idioms - particularly when tasking or communicating a workplace matter - is a simple way that we can avoid excluding people for whom English is not their first language.

Words to choose

Instead of	Use
Illegal immigrant	Asylum seeker, person seeking asylum, refugee
Mixed race	Biracial, multiracial
Minorities	Under-represented groups

All Australian citizens and permanent residents – no matter what their religion, skin colour or country of birth – are Australians.

You should avoid describing people by their country of origin or religion, as in 'Chinese Australian' or 'Muslim Australian', unless it's relevant.

Asking someone *"Where are you from?"* is often innocently used to show interest in someone, however if you ask it when you first meet someone based on their appearance or accent, it can lead to that person feeling set apart from other Australians.

Terms and phrases to rethink

- Correctly pronouncing a person's name is important to a sense of inclusion and demonstrates that you are culturally sensitive and care about ensuring people feel comfortable and welcome. Making references to an individual's cultural backgrounds and/or faith is generally not necessary within work context.
- Where it is appropriate to speak about a person's cultural background, try to be specific as possible. Referring to an individual as *'Asian'* or *'African'* overlooks the unique cultures of many countries.
- Stereotypes – *"Your English is so good!"* may seem innocent but can lead to a person feel different from their peers based on physical appearances.
- If a person makes jokes or uses terms to describe their own cultural background, this does not mean they will be comfortable with others using that language or that anyone else who belongs to that demographic will use that language either.
- It is important to be mindful that jokes that reinforce stereotypes or racist views are not appropriate for the workplace, regardless of whether the person making the joke belongs to that community.
- Avoid cultural appropriation – be mindful not to appropriate cultural symbols, clothing, or practices without understanding their significance.

Responding to non-inclusive language

The best way to set expectations about inclusive language is to address any non-inclusive language directly when it occurs. It is important that we focus on correcting our own missteps more than we do other people's.

For example, you may choose to:

- Call out the language or behaviour - avoid name-calling (e.g. calling someone racist).
- Appeal to the person's better side – *"that doesn't sound like you to say that"*.
- Take the person aside at a later moment and explain why the language was non-inclusive.

It is important to remember in the workplace that what may be funny to one person can be offensive or upsetting to another. Comments intended as a joke can be a form of harassment or discriminatory behaviour, therefore any jokes that are demeaning to demographics of people or characteristics are best avoided.

Remember:

- Getting called out doesn't mean you need to defend yourself – apologise and move on. Trivialising someone else's feelings does not help build inclusion.
- Instead of trying to defend or excuse your actions, try focusing on understanding the other persons perspective.
- If you are confused by their reaction, you could ask, *"Could you explain why what I said was wrong?"*.

Support

If you would like more information on inclusive language for cultural and linguistic diversity, AGAA recommends:
- Diversity Council Australia (DCA) - https://www.dca.org.au/
- Amnesty International - https://www.amnesty.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/AIA-Inclusive-Language-and-Events-Guide-3.pdf